

A

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE ENGLISH NATION.

Thursday, April 4. 1706.

In tred a little way, into the State of our Publick Affairs in the precedent Papers, I have brought it down to the turn lately given them, by changing hands in the Ministry ; it is not for me to examine, or pretend to know, or if I did, to publish all the Reasons Her Majesty found sufficient to move her, to disposes some Men of some Power, which they Ill Exercis'd, and worse deserv'd.

But the Publick Consequences of things, are subjected to every bodies Remarks, and not to launch too far in the strange variety of things, I shall at present only trace the Behaviour of the Party displac'd, the Temper and Conduct of the Persons and Party, and shew thereby, as well the Necessity there was of putting them out, as the Ne-

cessity there is still of keeping them so ; one of which will apparently arise from the other.

The first Attempt these Gentlemen made upon the declining of their Powers, and when they saw it in some Danger, was by their Interest in Parliament, to try if they could not shew themselves there, too formidable to be meddl'd with.

I am not of the Opinion, some too warm People entertain'd, that French Money had reach'd the Integrity of our Representatives, and that the Multitude of *Louis d'Ors* we saw at the beginning of this Reign, were the Effect of Bribes sent over from France, to Debauch our Counsellors ; I always thought the *Black List* a peice of Scandalous Forgery, the *Pouffineers* a trifling Baster ;

Banter ; and the Story of the Oyster-Barrel full of Pistoles, had nothing in it so bad as the Consequence, to one poor Gentleman, in bringing in his Creditors upon him, supposing he had receiv'd a great Bribe ; which I believe he would have been very glad had been true.

Our Party needed no Bribes, and the French King is too wise to throw away his Money, where he sees no occasion for it ; they that will do his Work for nothing, have no need of being prompted ; and when Men's private Interest or Spleen, pushes them on without his Assistance, to do his Work and their own together ; like the Devil with some sort of Sinners, he lets them alone, they need no Temptation.

Thus it happen'd here ; the Business these Gentlemen had before them, was to make their Interest appear so strong in the House of Commons, that the Court should not think it safe to attack them ; and that the Queen should apprehend if they were displace'd, it might be in their Power to Embarrass Affairs, check Supplies, and leave us all in a Condition not to be able to carry on the War.

How far they went in this, I need not recapitulate ; and how near they were to obtaining their Ends ; I cannot think any true Englishman can forget, how all their Proceedings met with a check, by the steadiness and Vigour of the House of Lords, cannot be pass'd over with Silence.

'Tis impossible to describe, how strangely every attack they made there was repuls'd ; how by the strength of Reasoning, by force of Argument, by Law, and by meer Justice, the Commons were baffl'd in every Attempt they made.

I am not going to enter into the History of the Proceedings, they are of such recent Memory, that they need no Repetition ; but in general, no Man that makes any Remarks of Publick Affairs, but must remember the unequal Strife ; how the Commons were run a-ground in their own Measures ; how they found Impeachments they would not Prosecute ; took Excepti-

ons at Words they could not censure ; how the Impeach'd Lords offer'd themselves to Tryal, Appeal'd to Justice, and contemn'd the Scandal ; how my Lord H——sham, having then a good Cause to defend, justify'd his Words beyond possibility of Reply — How they miscarried in the Ailesbury Case, and the Writs of Error, and how that Monstrous unheard of Petition to the Crown, to extend the Prerogative, appear'd in the World. How their Occasional Bills were so weakly defended, and yet so obstinately adhered to, that they stood in their own Light, and would not at first accept of, what at last they would have been glad of. How they with-held New Writs from Burroughs, whose Elections they had declar'd void, venturing thereby to make themselves an Imperfect Representative.

These things are full Demonstrations of what I am upon ; and the Designs of a Party of Men, that aim'd at subverting our Constitution, appear'd so gross, and indeed so weak, that the whole World began to see into the bottom of it.

I must not go over this Remark without observing, that now every step they took, was so Excentrick, that like *Syphus* his Rolling Stone, which was to be roll'd up Hill ; every Attempt weaken'd them, and the farther they went upward, the stronger their recoiling Cause came back upon them, into a Condition less able to maintain themselves, than they were before.

Their Pen and Ink Advocates, that undertook to defend their Proceedings, did it so absurdly, so superficially, and so void of Evidence in Fact, that every Reply to their Arguments, made their Friends blush for them ; and though Sir H——try'd all his Rhetorick, and made things appear, with a quite different Face than they were ; yet, like his late Attempt upon Mr. M—— ; 'twas as empty of Fact, as it was specious in Appearance, and as few People were deceiv'd by one, as by t'other.

MISCELLANEA.

IT is now some time since I receiv'd the following Letter, relating to the *Dissenting Ministers* in the Country, being Assess'd and Charg'd in the Countries, by Virtue of the Land Tax, or 4 s. Aid; and in the last Years Tax, I found it was too late to give them any Redress, because they had laps'd the time of Appeal, and had Voluntarily paid the Money, and I had taken no Notice of it now, had I not found, that in several Parts of England, they continue to Impose upon them in the same manner. I shall however give the Letter in its Genuine Sence, and Answer it briefly at present. The Letter is as follows.

S I · R,

WE were inform'd here, that in the 4 s. Tax as it was laid this Year, the Ministers, neither of the Church of England, or of the *Dissenters* were not to be Tax'd, and that as the Letter of the Law does not affect them, so we understood, that at London they did not pay it, notwithstanding which in our Assessment, all the *Dissenting Ministers* in this Country are Tax'd, and some have quietly Paid it — Others having appeal'd to the Commissioners, could obtain no Relief, but were told they must pay it, and there Goods have been strain'd for it; but among the rest, our Minister being an Antient Man, and having no visible Effects to seize upon, they brought a Warrant from the Justice of Peace for him; the poor Gentleman being lame of the Gout, was oblig'd to get a Cart for want of a Coach, to carry him to the Justice, which was three Miles; when he came there, they told him he was Complain'd against for not Paying the Tax, and demanded the Reason why he did not Pay the Queen's Tax? the Minister Reply'd; he was Inform'd they had no Right by Law to Demand

it, and that he was not to be taxed by this Act, and produc'd the Act of Parliament, — The Justice preach'd a long and something abusive Lecture to him of *Disloyalty and Disaffection* to the Government, and told him, he should have appeal'd to the Commissioners; he told him he had appeal'd, but could not have Justice, and being sick and lame, was not able to go and speak for himself; the Justice threaten'd to send him to the County Jail; and what with his railing and threatening, so over-aw'd the poor Man, that to be quiet, he chose rather to pay the money than dispute it with him, and so have a great many more in this Country; and those that have not, have had their Goods seized upon, and sold to pay it — Pray, Sir, let me know what they do at London in this Case; and if it be not our due to pay, what course we must take to defend our selves.

This Letter, as before, has slept some time in my Hands, and had still continued to do so, had I not receiv'd Repeated Accounts, that in a great many Places in England, the Commissioners and Assessors, still continue to impose upon the Ignorance in the Law, and the Peaceable Temper of the *Dissenting Ministers* in remote Parts, and make use of their Power and Authority, to Impose Illegally such Taxes and Impositions, as the Law in no wise permits, and not at all agreeable, to the true intent and Meaning of the Act of Parliament.

These are indeed but a few Instances, of the intollerable Treatment, the *Dissenting Ministers* meet with, in the Peaceable Exercise of their Function, and the discharge of their Duty and Trust — But since it is that, which is to be easily and Legally Redress'd, I think I make no Breach upon the Peaceable Temper, I Exhort all People, if I say to these Gentlemen,